



NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE
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Media Contact: James Ramey (614) 728-2100
james_ramey@nass.usda.gov

PRELIMINARY CENSUS RESULTS GIVE FIRST LOOK AT CHANGING FACE OF AGRICULTURE

Washington, February 3, 2004 -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) announced today that preliminary demographic data from the 2002 Census of Agriculture - the Nations largest agricultural information-gathering project - are now available at the state and national levels. Final, complete data for Puerto Rico are also available. The 2002 Census of Agriculture serves as the most comprehensive source of data describing U.S. agriculture. This census incorporates collection of new data and improved methodologies to enable us to present the most complete and accurate picture of U.S. agriculture available, said State Statistician Jim Ramey.

Several new measures were included in the 2002 Census of Agriculture, including information about more than one operator per farm.

Demographic data contained in the report released today include sex of operator, residence on or off the farm, days worked off farm, years present on farm, age group categories, race, and number of persons living in each household. For example, preliminary results show:

The average age of the principal operator on Ohio farms in 2002 was 53.8-years-old.

25.4 percent of Ohio farm operators were women in 2002; the number of women who were principal operators increased 28.0 percent from 1997.

Principal operators of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin increased by 124.1

percent from 1997 to 2002.

91.1 percent of Ohios agricultural operations are still run by individuals or families and many are still small farms.

60.0 percent of Ohio operations had less than \$10,000 in sales of agricultural products in 2002.

The number of Ohio farms decreased from 1997 by 952 to 77,785 in 2002.

Total land in Ohio farms decreased by some 128 thousand acres since 1997 to a new total of 14.6 million acres in 2002.

Final 2002 Census of Agriculture data at the national, state and county levels will be released on June 3, 2004. That report will provide first time facts about organic crop acreage and sales, production contracts, farm computer and Internet use, plus the broader, full range of traditional census data including land use and ownership; acres irrigated; crop acreage and quantities harvested; livestock and poultry inventories; value of products sold; value of production contracts; participation in Federal farm programs; and, market value of land and buildings. The census of agriculture is currently conducted every 5 years; the first was conducted in conjunction with the 1840 population census.

All reports from the 2002 Census of Agriculture will be available free through the NASS web site at www.usda.gov/nass/. For additional information regarding the Census, call the NASS Hotline at 1-800-727-9540.

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